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PARENTS AND TEENAGERS



A Guide for Home Economics Program Assistants

Parents often feel that their teenagers are getting out of hand.
They want to know why kids act the way they do.
They may ask you what you would do if you were in their shoes.

YOU CAN HELP PARENTS MOST WHEN YOU:

- Don't tell them what to do or what you would do.
- Ask thought-provoking questions when they talk about their children.
- Help them find out that other parents have just about the same problems they do.
- Talk about what parents and children need.

DON'T TELL PARENTS WHAT YOU WOULD DO TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS.

This is not helpful because how parents act depends on . . .

- How a problem looks to them.
- How they have handled problems like this before.
- How they feel at the time.
- What they know how to do.

You would handle it a different way because you are a different person.

ASK QUESTIONS WHEN PARENTS TALK ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN.

This helps them to think about what to do. Ask questions like these:

- How do you suppose Johnny feels about this?
- How do you think this looks to Johnny?
- If you do this, how will Johnny act?
- What do you want Johnny to learn?
- How do you feel about this?
- Would it help if you do this?

HELP THEM FIND OUT THAT OTHER PARENTS HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS.

This makes them feel that they are not alone. Other parents have teenagers who:

Go through a time when they think parents are old-fashioned.

Think parents don't know anything.

Think their parents treat them like babies.

Fight against being treated like younger children.

Break rules.

Get sassy.

They learn that other parents sometimes forget that children are growing up. They learn that "letting go" is hard for parents. Some parents don't want their children to grow up and leave them.

HELP THEM LEARN WHAT PARENTS AND CHILDREN NEED.

- Teenagers need rules, but they need some say about what the rules are.
- They need to help make rules which affect them.
- Teenagers need help in knowing how to act.
- They need to know that some behavior is wrong.
- Teenagers need a chance to tell how they feel and what they think.
- They need to talk about themselves and their plans.
- Teenagers try to find answers to hard questions like:
 - Who am I?
 - What can I be?
 - Who should my friends be?
 - Who needs me?
 - Who do I need?
- Teenagers need to feel good about themselves.
- They need to know their family cares for them, even when they make mistakes and get in trouble.
- They need attention and praise:
 - When they help.
 - When they are kind.
 - When they try.

The materials on *Parents and Teenagers* for agents, program assistants, and parents, were prepared by Mrs. Roberta C. Frasier, Consultant (Family Life Specialist, Oregon State Extension Service), in collaboration with Edward V. Pope, Human Development and Human Relations Specialist, Division of Home Economics, Federal Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture.